The SCEPTRE

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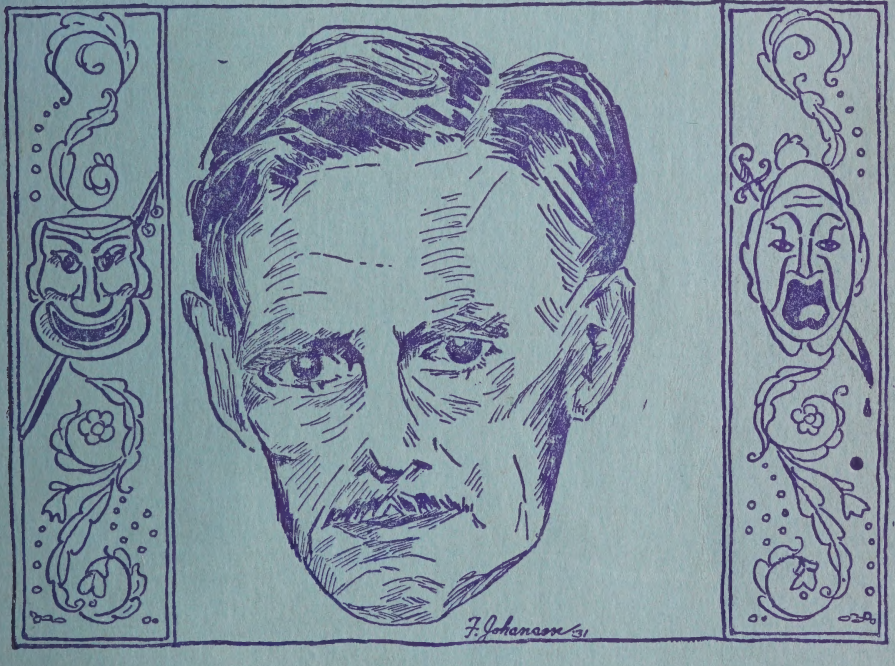

THE FAME OF EUGENE O'NEIL

By Marion Townend

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The SCEPTRE

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CHRISTMAS

Christmas again! What image does that call up before your eyes? Crowded streets, traffic jams, stores packed with impatient and hurried customers, tired clerks and saleswomen? But is that as true a picture this year as previously? There is not the usual exciting bustle on the streets, and a rather pathetic quiet fills the stores. One notes the absence of the usual expensive trinkets and their replacement by sensible gifts. Santa Claus will fill our stockings this year with more of the necessities and with less of the luxuries of life. We will have to supply the difference with a little more friendship and a little more love. And who can say that the Christmas spirit will not be just as strong!

—*The Editor.*

The
SCEPTRE
December
1931
◆

by Marion Townend

THE FAME OF EUGENE O' NEIL

From a Talk for the Charlotte Little Theatre

The subject of this article is a very timely one. The man I am going to tell you about is the man of the hour in the theatrical world, because of his latest play which opened in New York last month. Not that he was not an important figure before this. Since 1920 he has been our leading American dramatist. Eugene O'Neil dominates the American stage. Every innovation is anticipated with great eagerness. Now he adopts the Greek masque (as in *The Great God Brown*); now he uses the aside borrowing from the Elizabethans, as in *Strange Interlude*).

O'Neil's fame is not national. It is international. Abroad, he is the best known of all our dramatists, his plays being produced in Berlin, Paris, Vienna, Prague, Buenos Aires—even Tokio. At home, he has received the Pulitzer Prize three times. (*Beyond the Horizon, Anna Christie,* and *The Strange Interlude.*) So famous are his plays that two of the original manuscripts, upon request, were given to the museum of New York City—*Bound East for Cardiff* and *Beyond the Horizon,* his first short play and first long play, respectively, ever to be produced. Such recognition usually comes to deceased writers.

Articles about him are found regularly in current magazines, papers, and reviews. He is tracked to the fastnesses of his Provincetown shack. . . . He has as many pictures of him as a movie star, but not because he seeks notoriety. No one could be more retiring—more averse to publicity.

He never lectures; seldom goes in public; rarely

goes to the theatre. He has seen relatively few of his own plays. In 1924 he wrote for the New York *Herald-Tribune,* "I rarely go to the theatre . . . although I read all the plays I can get. I don't go to the theatre because I can always do a better production in my mind . . . nor do I ever go to see one of my own plays . . . have seen only three of them up to date. My real reason is that I was practically brought up in the theatre . . . and I know too much about the acting. Acting, except when rarely inspired simply gets between me and the play." (For his last plays, however, he has changed his tactics. Before *Mouring Becomes Electra* he spent seven weeks in New York in rehearsal.)

His pictures show him as tall, lithe, and wiry. He has well chiseled features, a terribly determined jaw, a penetrating eye, a dark head, and dark mustache. Writers who have known him describe his manner as diffident—embarrassed. He is silent, except when he has something to say which interests him very much. He is not social—although not unfriendly when one knows him. He is an observer of life, more than an actor. His mother, a convent-trained girl, was very beautiful and pious. His father was a striking figure on the stage.

How did O'Neil achieve such a great reputation? What brought about his fame? In answer to these questions I am going to tell you something about his life stressing those things, which in my opinion contributed to his fame. . . . Reviewing his life so far, it all seems inevitable to me. The fates seemed to have decided that certain things should happen to this child of genius—so in the very beginning they had him born into the family of an actor.

Eugene O'Neil was born in 1888, the son of James

O'Neil, who was known in the last generation as the great actor of the Count of Monte Cristo. . . . So we find O'Neil born into the tradition of the stage—just as the Barrymores were born to the stage. His life was destined to be different from the very beginning. As a tiny child up to the age of seven he toured the country with his father and mother on the former's itinerary.

Of his mother's influence we can only guess. We do know she was a pianist of some ability and O'Neil tells us that he has always, from earliest childhood, enjoyed good music. I happen to believe that love of music goes hand in hand with good writing, and that a certain rythm and beauty are akin to both music and writing. . . .For that reason, I believe this love of music inculcated in O'Neil by his mother, influenced O'Neil's writing strongly. James O'Neil, the father, was the more striking—He is said to have made $50,000 a season, touring with his *Monte Cristo.* Later, however, he regretted having spent 16 years on one part in one play . . . saying it had ruined his career as a great actor.

O'Neil went to a boarding school, then to Princeton. (Class of 1910.) He stayed but one year. For some minor offence he was suspended before he took his examinations, but he could have returned the next year had his interest continued. His first job was in a mail order house in New York City, in which his father had an interest.

An unfortunate marriage, in 1909, at the age of 21, lasted three years, before it ended in divorce. That his marriage was not what one might call a success one might guess from the fact that in 1909 (his first year of married life) he was gold prospecting in the

Honduras. In 1910 he was touring with his father, after which he went to sea.

His sea travels took him to South America, Africa, and England. That these experiences made a deep impression, we know from the number of plays with the sea as a background and sailors as characters. In South America he stayed at Buenos Aires for some time, working at odd jobs which he managed to quit or to be discharged from. At Buenos Aires O'Neil was an outcast among outcasts, living with sailors, stevedores, and down-and-outs.

There was a story told, a number of years ago, in the Bookman, I believe, of a man of some learning who, in 1911 wandered into a seaside saloon in that South American city—starving for real conversation. Accosted by someone—perhaps the bar tender—he answered with a line of poetry. Great to his surprise the poem was finished by a voice somewhere among the tables. He turned and joined the young, dark haired man, dressed in shabby sea-going clothes, who answered him, and the two of them in that dirty, smoke-filled saloon talked books, and poetry, and drama—until seven in the morning. Before they left each other, the young man told the other his name was Eugene O'Neil, New York City. Not until some years later did the man find out that the young man had become *the* Eugene O'Neil, New York City.

In 1911, back in New York, O'Neil lived at a low, water-front dive called Jimmy-the-Priest's (the original of the saloon in the first act of his play *Anna Christie*—called there, Johnny-the-Priest's). A great deal about the place can be learned from the fact that he paid three dollars a month for his room which he shared with none other than Chris—the man he made

into Anna Christie's father—a dissolute old sailor who in real life was frozen to death one Christmas Eve while drunkenly staggering to his coal barge.

After this period of complete destitution, Eugene got to New Orleans somehow, where his father was playing—*Monte Christo,* of course. His father at this time had just about given him up. He refused his son money, but did offer him a job in the play—a small part. So, for want of something better, this wayward son joined his father and became an actor for a short while. After the season was over, he went with his parents to their summer home in New London, Conn., and worked for a time as a newspaper reporter for the New London *Telegram.*

So far, O'Neil's life had been one of continual wanderings. (His father's example seems to me partly responsible for that.) Eugene had never stayed in one place. His life had been hard. He had had malarial fever; he had drunk to excess. . . . But in 1912 his whole life was radically changed by one word from a physician—"Tuberculosis!" We cannot exaggerate the importance of this illness. He went to Gaylord Farm, Wallingford, Conn., and for the first time he sat back to think it over. At 24 he was old in experience. He had been everywhere; had seen everything—the dregs, the roots of things . . . but now he was ill.

O'Neil wrote about his illness—"Undoubtedly the idleness forced upon me at the sanitarium . . . forced me into mental activity as I had always been nervous temperamentally." Here it was that the urge to write first came to him. Sickness has done the same for many writers.

The Straw, one of his early plays, has its setting in a Tuberculosis sanitarium. One wouldn't expect to

find much drama in consumption, but O'Neil did. . . . I can still remember the first time I came across this play—and I can still remember how I felt during the scene where the patients almost prayerfully went to be weighed—as they did periodically . . . the utter despair when the weight was less than before, for the scales were a sort of governor's pardon. . . . It was their key to freedom.

Biographers are fond of writing that O'Neil went into the sanitarium a boy and came out a man. Anyway, we know his life was revolutionized from the day he entered it. After 5 months spent there, he went to live with an English family whose home overlooked Long Island Sound. Here he spent a whole year recuperating, reading, resting, exercising, . . . and writing. One thing this serious contact with real illness did for him was to make him more than careful with his physical body. Now, we are told, he leads a healthy outdoor life; swims (winter and summer—and that takes courage if he does it at Provincetown), plays tennis, goes boating. And his body today is lithe and wiry.

Admitting the dissipation of his early years, one must agree that a man who came back at the rate O'Neil did—had stamina. He suddenly began to work with an eagerness and a vigor that has only increased with the years. In the first 16 months of his literary life, he wrote—besides poetry—two one-act plays, and two long ones. In the ten years between 1916-1926, 22 plays were produced!

He did serious reading that year on Long Island too. Nietszche, Wedekind, (in the original German) the Elizabethans, the Greeks, Ibsen, Strindburg.

His father paid to have his first book of plays published, *Thirst,* although he must have been rather puzzled by these first attempts of his son. Surely they were not "theater" as the older—yes, and the younger O'Neil knew it. From the outset O'Neil followed no rules. He made his own—he needed no theatrical tricks.

Now that he had begun to work, the next years were a veritable march to fame. Next we find him at Harvard in Professor Baker's famous 47 Workshop (which has since moved to Yale). Just how much that year of formal training was to O'Neil we do not know, but he speaks very highly of Baker's judgment and said he received great encouragement there.

In 1916 the scene shifts to Provincetown, Cape Cod, Mass. In that summer colony was a small group who had a kind of little theatre. They did short original plays for the summer visitors, at the Wharf Theatre (owned by Mary Horton Vorse). George Cram Cook was their chief, and Susan Glaspell their main contributor. Someone remarked to Susan Glaspell that summer that a young fellow had just come to the village with a trunk full of plays. "Well, tell him we don't need a trunk full," she said, "but ask him to bring one."

O'Neil came and brought one . . . that was *Bound East for Cardiff*—a one-act play. This play then was the first O'Neil play ever to be acted. It was written in 1914 (before the Harvard course) and acted by the amateur group which later in New York became the Provincetown Players, (They were not called that during their two summers in Provincetown). O'Neil took the part of the second mate.

This association was mutually advantageous. O'Neil at the outset had the opportunity of putting his plays into action. The Little Theatre was a kind of experimental laboratory for his plays. On the other hand without O'Neil the Wharf Theatre may have died for lack of original material with which to attract and keep their subscribers. And too, since their organization (They opened at the Playwrights Theater in 1916 in New York) they have produced nearly all of O'Neil's one-act plays, and have received goodly sums from them.

Provincetown still holds a place in O'Neil's heart. He has a home there where he can go summers—a gray wind-blown shack—formerly used by coast guards. It is four miles from town, deep in the sand dunes, with only sea and sky and sand around it. O'Neil loves it and can write there in perfect peace, near to his friend—the sea.

In 1920 O'Neil abandoned the one-act play. "I am no longer interested," he said, "in the one-act play. It is an unsatisfactory form—cannot go far enough. The one-act play is, however, a fine vehicle for something poetical, for something spiritual in feeling—that cannot be carried through a long play."

In 1920 came his first long play, *Beyond the Horizon*. This play made a deep impression upon the public and established him securely in first place among American dramatists. The Pulitzer Prize was awarded him for it. *Emperor Jones Diff'rent, Anna Christie, The Straw, The Hairy Ape, All God's Chillun Got Wings, Desire Under the Elms,* and *The Great God Brown* were some of the plays following in the next half dozen years, each one giving rise to great discussions pro and con. *Marco's Millions* was

produced in 1927. This was the first long play to be performed on the stage . . . a splendid piece of satire.

In all the reading I have done on O'Neil I have been continually struck by the similarity between O'Neil and one of the early Elizabethans. The likeness became so marked that I found myself looking for some remarks about their points of likeness in the various criticisms I was reading. It seemed to be so obvious to me! Somehow O'Neil reminds me very strongly of Christopher Marlowe.

O'Neil doesn't have intellectual themes for his plays —for example, like Shaw or Galsworthy. He appeals to the emotions. And like Christopher Marlowe, O'Neil has one strong theme in every play—some driving, devastating force which very often disintegrates character. In *Desire Under the Elms,* the force is sex and avarice. In *All God's Chilluns Got Wings* it is race prejudice; in *Ile* it is pride; in *The Strange Interlude*—introversion. O'Neil's very claim to greatness is his intensity, his force and power in expressing the one great emotion dominating the play.

Christopher Marlowe, whose short tragic life left us so few plays—has the same kinds of greatness. He is dynamic, sometimes bombastic, elemental (and, of course, does not have the mystic, symbolic attributes of O'Neil.) In *The Jew of Malta* the ruling passion is greed, in *Tamburlane the Great* the disintegrating force is love of power, in *Doctor Faustus* it is worldly wisdom, in *Edward Second* the devastating force is weakness.

Marlowe and O'Neil—two Titans! To me alike, not in their method, but in their greatness. Both hostile—both intense—both depicting one strong emotional human theme.

O'Neil doesn't always fulfill the purpose of his plays. He is sometimes so absorbed in his one dominating theme he neglects to round out his characters completely. He has been accused of being lacking in humor . . . he is not perfect. He is best in the vernacular—using dialect. He is best with sailors, stokers, negroes, derelicts of society. He cannot be called pessimistic, for his works transcend pessimism. Whipple, one of his critics, describes him as "hostile, salutary and bracing like a northeast wind; a corrective—a bitter herb."

I can't have any "and he lived happily ever after" in discussing O'Neil . . . for O'Neil is still working —still doing new things. It is far too early to write a finis for him. But I can tell you something about his new play and tie up a few loose threads, as Dickens loved to do.

Mourning Becomes Electra opened in November in the Guild Theatre, New York. For a long time, theatre-goers had been hearing rumors about this play. One of the most exaggerated said it was to run for three weeks. Until the last rehearsal O'Neil had planned to give it on three alternate evenings of the same week. At this rehearsal he discovered that the play was not as long in action as he had anticipated, and decided to give it in one long performance, thinking a single performance would give it more unity.

The play is a trilogy—*The Homecoming—The Hunted—The Haunted*—14 acts in all. On the premiere performance, the play opened at four in the afternoon for the benefit of the dramatic critics of the morning newspapers. Since then it starts at five in the afternoon (earlier than the *Strange Interlude*)

lasting until after eleven with an hour out for dinner. The actresses are Nazmova and Alice Bradey—both of whom had admirable opportunities. Alice Bradey is on the stage in every act.

From the title and plot we discover O'Neil has patterned his play after the Greek one *Electra,* treated by Euripides, Aristaphanes, and Sophocles at various times.

Critics recorded, the morning after the play's debut, that despite the long performance, the audience was rapt, displaying no sign of restlessness. (I know that was true of *Strange Interlude*). He doesn't use the aside, and although he doesn't use the mask, the characters have a make-up, white and mask-like, and tragic as is the Greek play.

O'Neil has been in New York seven weeks in rehearsals. He says he will not live abroad again. He has been living in France where most of his last play was written. He is at present married to Carlotta Monterery, an actress. He has three children; his oldest son, Eugene, Jr. (by his first marriage) is in Yale.

His father, who had once dispaired of him, lived to see him famous. . . . But this fame is not a place of rest and contentment. He is not like his father; he could not go on playing *Monte Christo* for sixteen years. He is an experimentalist . . . He will go on discovering new forms. He is never content. Perhaps that last fact is one of the reasons why he is today America's greatest Dramatist.

The
SCEPTRE
December
1931

by Margaret Jones

WINTER

Winter brings cold weather,
But a million other things.
Besides her snow and windy gale,
Bare brown meadow and barren vale,
She brings a soft and lovely tale
Told as the bright fire sings.

Besides her mantle of ice and snow
She wears garments of beauty rare.
In the south her grey woods serene,
Red rolling hills, and pine trees green
In the warm sunlight are seen,
Breathing the wintry air.

The songs of winter are not always sad
And mere chants of weariness,
For the sparrow's chirp is always heard
And the lays of the happy mocking bird,
Or dry brown leaves by the winds are stirred:
True sounds of cheerfulness.

The
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by Florence Laslie

THE MUSIC REVEALS

I

A human heart lay naked within my hands today—
A melody placed it there.

II

Softly, softly, the music came to me at first
Like a vague and unformed dream
That would prepare one's soul for revelations
That are rare and seldom granted.
And as the theme grew more distinct,
So potent was the spell it cast,
That even my dumb flesh could sense
The approach of some strange miracle.

III

The music grew still louder, and suddenly
Burst forth with all the passion of the human soul—
And lo! Within my two hands I seemed
To hold a tortured heart laid bare.
It quivered beneath my touch—it cried
Aloud in its pain. It struggled
Wildly, against all that is futile, ugly, and unjust,
Throbbing rebelliously within my hands
Until it was battered, torn, and sore.

IV

And then at last, in its groping,
The music reached a note of sublimity—
Of perfect beauty!
And finding that last dying note,
The heart within my hands lay stilled and calm,
Then vanished from my sight.

V

A human heart lay naked within my hands today—
A melody placed it there.

by Inez Dellinger

HIDDEN

You see me pass;
You do not know
That round my heart
Fierce north winds blow.

You would not think
As I pass by
My heart is tossing
In the sky.

And I should not
Expect that you
Would know it when
It broke in two.

by Margaret Blankenship

The
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1931

HEATH-CROPPERS

"The great inviolate place had an ancient permanence which the sea cannot claim. Who can say of a particular sea that it is old? Distilled by the sun, kneaded by the moon, it is renewed in a year, in a day, or in an hour. The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, and the people changed, yet Egdon remained." Egdon Heath, the setting of *The Return of the Native,* is not gazed upon by one with the calm curiosity of a stranger but by one at home and happy among old sights and sounds. Mr. Hardy dwells at length upon the beauty of its desolate wastes which are so suggestive of tragic possibilities. He would not have it changed, but there are those who might resist the leveling and absorbing forces of this heath. And so two aspects of the heath are presented: its gloom and loneliness, its savage permanence, resisting cultivation; and its solitude and monotony so pleasing to those without ambition who seek the more obscure way of life.

The dark brooding spirit of Egdon Heath overshadows every scene. It has an obstinate way of assimulating men to its likeness instead of yielding to their working. It stands like a god dealing out punishment to those opposing its will and reward to those who respect its laws. Egdon Heath is an "untamable Ishmatelitish thing," a gigantic landscape on which the men and women are but figures, an expanse of furze, whose people are but heath-croppers—dimly discerned, but who are nevertheless creatures of the heath.

These seamed and antique features of Egdon Heath held in their grasp Eustacia Vye, a passionate, beautiful girl who revolted against the austere loneliness of the never changing heath. And yet there was a strange congruity between her dark and unconventional passions and the wastes of Egdon. The solitude of her life had given to Eustacia a dignity, and to her emotions, a force. In contrast to her love for brilliance, she was always placed in a background of somber blacks and browns; usually being seen wandering about dusk on the heath, whose darkness brings down night before its time. As to Eustacia the darker pigments predominate. With her the reader will always associate the lonely and gloomy setting of the inviolate wastes of Egdon, from which she vainly sought to escape.

An entirely different aspect of the heath is associated with Clym Yeobright, Eustacia's husband. He had tasted the life of which Eustacia, except for a short period, had been deprived. From it he had turned in disgust to his old home on Edgon Heath. Through it he was inspired to spend his life in service to its people; and when he was delayed in this purpose he turned to the heath for comfort. In his leather garb we see him cutting furze in the hollows of the heath, a figure, "of a russet here not more distinguished from the scene around him than the green caterpillar from the leaf it feeds on." The life which Egdon demanded pleased and soothed him. Clym is a product of the heath.

These same two conflicting attitudes toward Egdon Heath are revealed through other characters. Diggory Venn is the spirit of Egdon. Silently under the guise of the reddleman he worked his way into the

lives of the other characters. His contempt for Wildeve and his love for Thomasin remained the same. He is as strange and yet as ordinary as the heath. Wildeve greatly reflected the feelings of Eustacia. In the game of dice played by Wildeve and Venn by the light of a circle of glowworms the aspects of the heath are again pitted against each other. The winner is evident.

The fact that Egdon Heath asserts its resistance against man is intensified throughout the novel by the characters being able to compel *some* of the powers of Nature into their service. When Eustacia and Clym met on Egdon, the signal for their trysting hour was an eclipse of the moon. The "lesser glory" of the relationship between Wildeve and Eustacia was measured by the fact that the signal for their meetings was the splash of a frog in a pool, or a moth that flies into the flame of a candle.

In Hardy's *Return of the Native* Egdon Heath dominates the plot and determines the characters. It is sentient: it feels, it speaks, it plays. The story opens, sadly adagio, on Egdon Heath at twilight on a November day. It closes on another night in November on this heath with wanderers drawn together around a rainflooded pool where men and women struggle for life in the dark. But all of this makes but little impression on the face of the heath. It remains "not merely the same as when Hardy first saw it . . . but the same as when, in the far back ages, the first creature worthy of the name of man clawed its grim bosom in search of plants or wild berries."

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by Caroline Akers

TAPESTRIES

God Rest Ye—Merry Christmas

The snowy silence is unbroken save by the far away "All's well" of the town crier. The stars, like bits of molten silver in a sea of dusky blue, smile happily on the world at peace. Clouds of smoke curl gently from countless chimneys into the midnight air. All is breathless stillness—Inside.

Yule logs blaze in the great stone fireplace. Mistletoe hangs from the rafters. The "Board" groans 'neath its gigantic load. The smell of roast pig and hot ale is in the air. A song and a smile rest on the lips all; for throughout the whole land—it is CHRISTMAS EVE.

by Caroline Akers

WHAT MEANS THIS HOLY NIGHT?

The stars glittered coldly on the white world. No sound was heard, save the faint, far off tinkling of sleigh-bells. The lights in the chapel shone happily out upon the hushed scene. The blind music-master sat on his bench before the huge key-board— one chime from the town clock and the great organ burst into a paroxysm of glorious sound as the first notes of "Joy to the World" rang out mild and clear into the crystal night. The ivory keys thrilled to the magic touch, never had the pedals yielded such tones as they now brought forth.

As the music floated out into the midnight air, heads were raised, hearts beat with ecstatic feeling, invalids felt strong, lovers who had quarreled forgot their troubles. There was "Peace on Earth."

When the last joyous chord had died, the music-master opened his eyes. A miracle! He saw!

Christ had been born again.

The
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by Lou Martin Miller

FOR MY LITTLE SISTER

Once when I was playin' hide an' seek among the trees,
An' I was hidin' hind a stump all bent down on my knees:
I saw from out a teeny crack
Away down by my toe
The weeniest, winiest, woodsiest elf came
And tripping he did go
Down a teensy, tinsy, woodsy path
All covered over with leaves
To the dearest pinkest clover house
And right beneath the eaves, he went
Through a cunnin' pinky doorway.
That was shinin' under there,
N'en in a pinky hallway
An' up a cunnin' stair
Into a rosy bedroom
Where he jumped into a bed
An, all at once I noticed that the sky was gettin' red—
And suddenly I waked right up and found me—home in bed!

The
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December
1931

By Jeanette Malloy

MEDITATION

'Tis when the shades of night are falling fast
I sit in solitude, in twilight deep
And ask my heavy, burdened soul at last
The burning question, as the stars do peep.
"Where in my life have I attained success?
Have I the coward been in Life's hard play?
Or have I demonstrated nobleness?
For I have striven rightly day by day."
A calm sweet voice then whispers this to me:
"If truly you have given all your best
Of kindness, generousness, and charity ,
Then rightly comes to you sweet happiness."
How wondrous sweet is this strong consolation,
My weary soul is filled with exaltation!

The
SCEPTRE
December
1931
◆

by Marjorie Wood Blankenship

MY LITTLE GREEN PRIMER

Little green primer now hidden so carefully,
Hinting of memories, now laid to rest,
Little green primer now sleeping so peacefully
Down in the depths of my old cedar chest!
Teacher you were of my childhood. You taught me
First of life's lessons; its treasures you brought me,
Hungry for memories, once more I sought thee
Down in the depths of my old cedar chest.

Little green primer, I lift you up tenderly
Calling back mem'ries of childhood's sweet hour.
Little green primer, there, fashioned so sweetly,
On your green cover there blooms a red flower.
Here it now rests. On the cover, reposes
A great scarlet blossom—how proudly it poses
Entwined in the midst of a garland of roses.
On your green cover there blooms a red flower.

Little green primer, I open you lovingly.
Here are the marks that I left long ago;
All the old pages I turn now so carefully,
Stories in words that enchanted me so.
These are the pictures my fancy ignited,
Back in my childhood. My fancy delighted
All the gay colors I eagerly sighted
Here in the lessons you taught me to know.

Little green primer, I close you now tenderly;
Back with old treasures I lay you to rest.
Little green primer, once more you are dreaming
Down in the depths of my old cedar chest.
Somehow the rose seems a sentinel keeping
Watch o'er my treasure. Its garlands are creeping
Around your green cover, and you will be sleeping
Down through the years in my old cedar chest.

The
SCEPTRE
December
1931

by Marjorie Blankenship

MY PRAYER

Kindly Thou taught me in this life, oh God,
Truths which have helped me now to live each day
Unflinchingly; though the raging tempests storm
And drive the world's fair riches to decay.
And Thou hast been an aid through every day,
For Thou has taught me how to laugh; to sing;
To love; to trust; to hold to every good;
And yet! Thou failed to teach me just one thing!

I had no sorrows which could harm my life,
No clouds to dim the brightness of each day,
Which I could not cast out as unlike Thee
Which Thou couldst not wipe out in love's sweet way.
But I have seen Thy children all around,
Who stumbled, fell, nor cared to rise again;
Who hated life with all its pains and loss.
And I have heard these same unhappy men
Cry in despair; and say, "There is no God!
There is no Love, nor Hope, nor Mercy meek!
I have no faith, when this same God allows
Me now to walk in pathways dark and bleak.
There are some men who cling to Life and Hope;
They say that they have faith in some Great One
Who helps and aids; they have a God, perchance,
But we, unaided and alone, have none!"

Teach me, Oh God, to build a life of hope!
To build my character as firm as stone.
And all the sand, and all unstable things
I shall cast out! It shall be rock, alone.
And I shall work, and I shall build each day,
To rear my strong foundation to the sky,
And when these same embittered men may see,
I pray thee that they will not pass it by!
I pray that they may see my Rock of Truth,
That they may pause on every path they plod.
Teach me to say and do the helpful thing
That they may trust! This one thing, teach me, God!

by ***Katherine McLeskey***

I've seen one perfect thing:
Her hand—its slender fingers
Like the waxen petals of a lily,
Curled about her golden Cricifix.
. . . One perfect thing—in death.
Nov. 13, '31.

I couldn't tell you why I love you
Unless it's for the reason grasses love
The winds that crush them down against
A hill, or leaves love rain that sends
Them falling to the ground.
I couldn't tell you why I love you
Unless it's as the white moths love
The light that kills them, or
The stallion grows to love the hand that tames
Him. This alone I'm sure of: I
Was born to love you as I do.
Nov. 13, '31.

The
SCEPTRE
December
1931
◆

by Rebekah Hassell

TO L. R. M.
WHAT CAN I SING?

Oh, how can I thrill these Western hearts,
I, who am Orient-born,
Who've stepped a pace on native clogs,
Clad in native attire,
And met in the narrow city streets,
In crowded shops and homes
The hearts of humble Orient blood,
And spoken to them in their tongue.

Oh! They can see no stone lantern,
Waterfall, blossoms of plum.
They cannot thrill in the way I do
To the little songs of the flute,
Or the singing of "Kimi ga yo."
So let me sing to a few—
Just to myself, and you
That I grew up with, hand in hand,
As adopted children of that land.

by Margaret Jones

MARK TWAIN

My Father, Mark Twain; *Clara Clemens*
Harper and Brothers publishers, 1931, 292 pp.

"The Biography of Mark Twain" by his daughter, Clara Gabrilowitsch, gives a direct view into the unique and interesting life of Samuel Clemens in the home with his wife and daughters, and of Mark Twain among his books and on his lecture tours. The biography contains many letters written by Mark Twain to his wife, Livy. In every line is expressed the great affection between them. He made the statement that if he included or omitted anything in his works contrary to her advice he always regretted it. There was a vast difference between this sweet, peace-loving and God-fearing woman and the tumultous, fiery, and atheistic man. Mark Twain had no religion, but he always admired its presence in others.

During the early years of the author's married life the small family of five, including three girls, lived in the pleasant city of Hartford, Connecticut. That short period of smooth life was picturesque and quite different from the rather unsettled existence which followed. The author spent hours in his study among his writings and billiards. His brief recreation was to entertain the eager children who huddled around his knee to hear his imaginative and funny tales. Often he would bring books to the table and read during meal time. He read little poetry besides Browning, admiring the deep thoughts hidden among poetic words.

Financial adversities robbed the family of this peaceful life, so they sailed to Europe where they hoped that living expenses would be cheaper. Many interesting letters were written at this time by the father and husband who was in America most of the time. The life in Europe was full of joy for the young people, and years later they reluctantly departed from the Continent.

After the removal to America a great lecture tour was planned to clear away the final debt incurred by the failure of investments. Numerous friends offered financial aid, but all help was refused by the proud family. Upon the return from the long voyage the favorite daughter, Susie, was found dead. Sometime after this the beloved Livy passed away. There were additional sorrows and hardships in the life of Mark Twain. In contrast to his remarkable sense of humor there were shadows of dreariness which took possession of his nature. Such a man was not without eccentricities and a morbid temperament.

The author was a figure of popularity during the last years of his life. His opinions upon all political and social questions were greatly sought after. Once he was mentioned as a candidate for the presidency of the United States, but Mark Twain felt the personally he would not care to face his conscience after four years as president. One of his great honors at this time was a degree conferred at Oxford.

The death of Jean, the youngest child, cast darkness over the last days of the author, who died shortly afterwards. His own daughter says of him, "His had been a life of sorrows, struggles, disappointments, triumphs, joys, and once more sorrows. He had

fought his way on the battlefields with the fire of a soldier, but his weapons had been that wit and humor which is born of profound human understanding."

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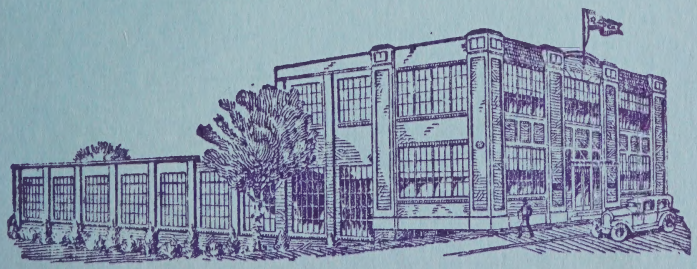

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